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A
SERMON

Preached
November V.
M D C L X X I I I .

A T
The *Abbey*-Church in *Westminster*.

BY *W. Pearson.*
JOHN Lord Bishop of CHESTER.



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P S A L M CXI. 4.

*He hath made his wonderful works
to be remembred.*



His Psalm begins with an *Hallelujah*, and wholly consisteth of Praise and Thanksgiving; in which the People of God express a just resentment and grateful acknowledgment of the chiefeſt mercies received by their Fathers, referring them all to the goodness of God; and jointly and publicly magnifying his Name, as if it were previous to
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Rev. xiv. 1. *the great voice of much people in Heaven heard by S. John.* The words are so indited by the Spirit, so penned by the Prophet, that they may be a perpetual Rule and Direction in all ages to the Church, guided by the same Providence, protected by the same Power, to have the like sense, and render the same Praise to him whose hand is not shortened at all.

Isa. l. 2.

This Duty is here taught us in such a manner as may render it most proper for us to offer, most acceptable to him to whom it is to be offered. The Expressions of the Psalmist sufficiently inform us, that it must be unfeigned and real, sincere and integral, without any intervening doubts of his benign and immediate Influence, ~~without mingling~~ thoughts or imaginations of any other assistance, ascribing to him the whole Deliverance, rendering to him the whole glory due unto his Name, that he alone may be exalted: there is nothing less than this intimated in the first address, *I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.* The same must also be publick and united, universal and illimited, with a general consent and holy kind
of

Psalm. xxix. 2.

Isa. ii. 11.

ver. 1.

(3)

of conspiracy; that the Praise to be rendered may bear some shew of proportion to the Mercy received, and, as the Blessing, so the Return, may be, without exception, publicly performed *in the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.*

VER. 1.

The Duty thus taught and described is next urged and enforced by expressing a reason, which hath a natural tendency to excite our performance, or rather to constrain us. *For the works of the Lord are great, ver. 2. His work is honourable and glorious; and his righteousness endureth for ever, ver. 3.* Whereby he sheweth, that in the extraordinary works of God wrought for the benefit of his people, the Attributes of the Divine Nature manifestly appear; as his Wisdom in contriving them, his Power in effecting them, his Goodness in vouchsafing them, his Justice in denying them to others, his Mercy in conferring or confining them to us; and at the same time informeth us, that our Praise consisteth in the sole acknowledgment of these Attributes. For he whose glorious Name is exalted above all blessing and praise, cannot receive glory from us: our
B 2 good.

Neh. ix. 5.

Pfal. xvi. 2. *goodness extendeth not to him: he is only glorified by the manifestation of himself; with our acknowledgment and declaration of the glorious Excellencies which are in him, and the Emanations proceeding from them.*

This general Reason is followed by a more immediate, more concerning and convincing Provocation to the same Duty; in that he which hath done so great things for our Fathers, and promised the like to us, hath also revealed the counsel of his will, and his design in the doing of them, both for our Benefit and his own Honour: that there might be not onely a sufficient Reason to move and persuade us, but also an exprels signification of his will to determine and oblige us unto a perpetual and never-failing Commemoration of his Goodness. And the Revelation of this Design of God is clearly delivered in the words of my Text, *He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.*

I shall not trouble you with any Division of my Text, but only raise this Observation from it which is naturally contained in it:
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Where God hath wrought any signal work for any People or Nation, he justly expecteth and requireth a publick and perpetual Acknowledgment of it. The truth of this indubitable Observation, as it is useful for many purposes, so it is evident by innumerable instances; three of which are glanced at in this short Psalm. First, *He sent redemption unto his people*, ver. 9: that is, He sent Moses and Aaron unto the Israelites, by whose hand he brought them out of the Land of Egypt: and certainly he made that wonderful work to be remembred. For they obtained their dimission by the intervention of a destroying Angel, while the Egyptians perished and they were preserved: upon which the Feast of the Passeeover was instituted, and with this remark, *This day shall be to you for a memorial: and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations: ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.* Upon their coming forth from thence, the Law of the Sabbath was fixed to a certain day in reference to the same deliverance with the like intimation. Remember that thou wast a Servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy

Exo. xii. 14.

Deut. v. 15.

thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the Lord thy God hath commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day.

Secondly, *He hath given meat unto them that fear him, ver. 5.* that is probably, He fed them miraculously when they cried unto him in the wilderness; he gave them Manna, even bread from Heaven, but with this Command: *Fill an Omer of it to be kept for your generations, that they may see the Bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness.* And this wonderful work was made to be remembered not only in it self, but in its signification. For he which said, *I am the bread which came down from heaven*, when he was by his Death to deliver us from the wrath of God, and to make a way open for us to eternal Life, instituted the Blessed Sacrament to this end, that *as often as we eat that bread and drink that Cup, we should shew the Lords death till he come.*

Exo. xvi. 32.

John vi. 41.

Thirdly, *He gave them the heritage of the heathen, ver. 6.* that is, when the sins of the Amorites were full, he drove out them and their neighbouring Nations, that he might place

place his peculiar people in the promised land of Canaan. He magnified *Josuah*, as he had done *Moses*, in the sight of all *Israel*; he cut off the waters of *Jordan*, that the Ark of the Covenant might pass before them, and the people follow that, to take possession of the Land. And lest the Memory of such a wonderful work should perish, he caused twelve stones taken out of the midst of *Jordan*, Jof. iv. 3.
 out of the place where the Priests feet stood firm, to be laid in *Gilgal*, for a memorial to the children of *Israel* for ever. 7.

Upon these and the like Instances, founded in the express Will and Revelation of God, delivered in the writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, preserved in the publick Monuments and sacred Archives of the Sanctuary, the Church of God in after-ages followed the same Rule, and without any scruple put upon themselves the same Obligation. For having a due apprehension of the great Equity and Justice of the thing it self required, whensoever the like Goodness of God was manifested to them, though his Will was not expressly revealed, when his Promises were fulfilled, though the Prophecies

sies ceased, they thought it necessary to oblige themselves and their Posterity to the Duty; as knowing that Thankfulness is a necessary virtue by the eternal Law of Nature, and that the Design of God, who changeth not, could not but be the same for his Glory, whensoever he made the same Demonstration of his Mercy. Thus the Jews in their Dispersion, being saved from a National Destruction, of themselves instituted the Feast of Purim: *they ordeined and took upon them and upon their seed, so that it should not fail, that they would keep these two days every year; And that these days should be remembred and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.*

Esth. ix. 27,
28.

It is easie to derive and justifie a Doctrin from so many holy Examples, all beyond exception, all the safest Patterns for our imitation: It is easie to improve it, if we will attend not only to the Truth, but also to the Reasons and the Use of it. And great Reasons there are, whether we consider the Benefit

nefit received or the duty required. First, in reference to any signal benefit, any extraordinary mercy received, it is necessary we should have a true sense and firm persuasion of the work of God in it, that we may learn to depend upon his Providence, which we find so vigilant over us, so beneficial to us; that we may attribute nothing to our selves, or sacrifice to our own nets; that we may discern his hand in his own work, and say with the Prophet, *I will praise thy name for ever, because thou hast done it; that we may speak as unfeignedly, as emphatically, To thee, O Lord, do we give thanks, to thee do we give thanks.* Psal. lii. 9. Psal. lxxv. 1.

Secondly, this design of God teacheth man to make a true estimate, and set a value upon the benefit received as coming from his hand. How great soever any temporal deliverance may be, which beareth proportion with the evil or danger escaped; it can never be so great in it self as in the consideration of the deliverer. No enjoyment on earth can equal this assurance, that the preserver of men careth for us, that the Lord taketh pleasure in his people. We

ought not to value so much any preservation, as his favour who preserveth us;
 Psal. lxxiii. 3. *because his loving kindness is better than life.*

Again, in relation to the duty of a grateful remembrance and suitable return of praise and thanksgiving, this design of God ought to be embraced with all comfort and cheerfulness. For what greater honour can man receive, than that God should desire to be honoured by him? What greater advantage can we have, than that he should therefore bless us, that he may receive praise from us, and purchase his glory by the expence of his goodness? If God, who enjoyed himself alone from eternity, hath made all things for the praise of his glory; if he hath designed to bless us, that we may glorifie him, and makes so advantageous an interpretation of the return of our thanks; if he hath thus *made his wonderful works to be remembered*, nothing but a wretched ingratitude can deprive us of them.

Lastly, the equity and excellency of the duty enforce the obligation. Here is not any

any thing required, but what may be justly challenged, what cannot be with any pretence denied. There is a moral obligation between men, to render to every man *Rom. xiii. 7.* his due, honour to whom honour: and this divine acknowledgment is required upon no other terms, Give unto the Lord the praise *Psal. xxix. 2.* due unto his name. It is required in a due proportion, praise him according to his excellent greatness, according to the manifestation of it. This is the exercise of the blessed Saints and Angels in the nearest view of his perfections: the language of heaven is *Alleluja*; and there is nothing more heavenly upon earth. For it is good *Psal. cxlvii. 1.* to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. *cvii. 8.* O that men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

I Am willing to suppose we may be in some measure by this brief discourse persuaded, that if this Nation hath received any signal mercy as upon this day, we are some way obliged to remember, to acknow-

ledge, to give thanks for it. If we be sensible of any extraordinary manifestation of the goodness of God towards us, I hope we shall not be so singular as to desert all the examples of the people of God in former ages.

And as to the certainty of the mercy, I think we may safely say with the Prophet,
 Psal. lxxi. 8. *O God, thou hast taught us from our youth, and hitherto have we declared thy wondrous works. We have been all brought up in this persuasion: hitherto we have thought the mercy great, and the duty necessary.*

Psal. xliv. 1. *Certainly we may without vanity say, We have heard with our ears, and our fathers have told us of the great works which God wrought for us in their days: Hitherto we have believed them, and praised him. But if there be any which speak so much of our forefathers, that we may give no credit to our fathers: if they teach us that our eyes and our hands daily deceive us, and therefore we must take heed lest we believe what we have heard with our ears: if in that which we take to be so grand a conspiracy, there was nothing of substance, but only the*
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the species of a treason; though the doctrine you have heard, be good to other purposes, yet as to this days assembly it will signifie little.

Being therefore the new Apologists for those Popish Conspirators have invented those shifts and excuses for them, which they themselves, though great Masters in that *Roman* art, could never pretend to, it will be necessary now to shew how this doctrine is applicable to this Nation, how the Text agreeth with the day. *God hath made his wonderful works to be remembered*, saith the Prophet: this is the rule. The work of this day was *his wonderful work*. The work of this day is never to be forgotten: this I take to be our case. We must acknowledge the first, or we are most stupid and insensible; we must perform the second, or we shall be most unworthy and ungrateful.

First, the work of this day was *his wonderful work*. The providence of God is concerned in all events, but is most conspicuous in his greatest mercies; the mercy manifesting his goodness, the greatness his power. *One Sparrow shall not fall to the ground* Matth. x. 29.

Ground without our Father, saith our Blessed Saviour; and can we believe that thousands of men should in that manner be preserved from destruction without his gracious and fatherly concurrence? How low soever their opinion of Hereticks be, as they are pleas'd to call them, can we think so many persons designed to slaughter were not of more value than many sparrows? Touch
 Matth. x. 31. *not mine anointed*, is the voice of God: shall the King and the Royal Family, shall the Nobles and Judges of the land, shall the Church and People of God, shall all whose lives are precious in his sight, be saved at once from utter destruction by any other hand than his?

Certainly either the design, or the deliverance was from God; except we place him, as *Epicurus* did, without the world, and wholly unconcerned in it. But that was too black, too horrid, too impious, to be ascribed to any but to the grand enemy of God and man, *the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience*. The deliverance therefore was from him from whom he fell, and by whom, though he continue
 Eph. ii. 2. *the*

the prince of the power of the air, he is still reserved in everlasting chains. As the machination of so much mischief to mankind bewrays the inveterate enmity of him who incessantly seeketh whom he may devour; so the prevention of so much cruelty is a sufficient demonstration of God's Philanthropy. Jude 6.

Though many other Arguments might be used to demonstrate that this was the work, the wonderful work of God, yet I shall make use onely of one more, drawn from the words of God, and those very remarkable. *Isaiah xxix. 14, 15, and 16. verses, Behold I will proceed to do a marvelous work amongst this people, even a marvelous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be lost. Wo unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord; and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth it? who knoweth it? Surely their turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as potters clay.*

Now

Now if this be God's proceeding to his marvelous works, as he himself afflueth us, it was never more evident than in the detection and defeat of this conspiracy. For never any sought so deep to hide their counsel: never any work was so in the dark. I speak not of the secret contrivance of the mischief in a cellar, but of their horrid secrecy and combination under the Seal of Sacramental Confession; which they profess to be so sacred with them, that not for the saving of a whole nation from the greatest mischief imaginable it may be violated. For, as they say, all men are commanded by the Law of God to confess all their sins to a Priest; and therefore the Priest by the same Law is obliged in no case to reveal them. For certainly God never intended to impose so hard a necessity on a sinner, as necessarily to lose one of the two, either his temporal, or his eternal life; his temporal, if he confess, his eternal, if he do not. Now if it were lawful for the Priest in any case to reveal the confession, and not lawful for the sinner not

not to confess, he could not obtain eternal, without manifest danger of his temporal, life. O the subtilty of the doctrine! the nicety of the practice! O the great *Roman* Asylum! the happy security in the pretence of penance to impenitent wretches! Here they may freely open their tender Consciences, and by a safe consultation receive advice in the worst of their designs for the advancement of the Gospel, and the propagation of the Faith. For they have of late so fortified this Castle, that it is become impregnable, though the Foundation of it be laid on a Tradition of their own, wholly unknown, as they have acknowledged, to the vast number of the Eastern Churches.

But if we grant the sacredness of Confession, and the duty of Secrecy in the Confessor, which I shall not deny; yet reason (which can judge what designs are fit to be kept secret, and what not) will teach all men, and some of their Divines have formerly taught, that a private secret ought to be revealed for a great and publick good.

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for the prevention of a general evil, the Confessor keeping the person confessing as close and safe as he may. And if this doctrine had been observed, our danger could not have long continued, which consisted in the mischief of the design, not in the number or power of the persons engaged, and consequently had vanished as soon as it was disclosed. But they were sufficiently fortified against this truth. For, that a private secret must yield to a great and publick good, holds only, they say, in those Countries where the Prince is a Catholick, who believes the great Religion of private and Sacramental Confession, and bears a great reverence unto it. And that too, when that Catholick Prince is so pious and religious, that it may be rationally presumed that he will by no means urge the Confessor with dangerous or troublesome interrogations, or in the least desire the persons of the Traitors. Thus upon an unjust supposal that our King was not a Catholick, and consequently not a Christian, both he and his kingdom were wholly

ly excluded from the benefit of universal reason and the doctrine of their most sober Divines; and so their most pernicious counsel lay still in the deep, wrapt up in the conscience of the Priest, who had been taught that he knew it not as man but as God, and that it was not a natural or civil, but a supernatural secret.

Again, it was very unreasonable to pretend the sacred power of the Seal to keep the secrecy of this horrid Conspiracy; because there was not any Confession made of a sin committed and repented of (which only hath a proper tendency to Absolution) but only of a crime intended and of a present resolution afterwards to commit it; which is not to be esteemed under Penance at all (except there can be penitence where there is no penitent or pretender to be such) neither is it capable of Absolution or any benefit of Confession, being it is not in it self Confession, but rather Consultation, and that the worst imaginable, including a resolute intention to commit the greatest crime. In this many of their Doctors a-

gree; and a Bishop of Rome hath given a full and clear resolution in the point. But in the greatest danger we could receive no benefit here, a new Distinction making up the breach. For we must understand that though it were not a formal, yet it was a virtual Confession; though it were but a Consultation, yet it had some reference to a Sacramental Confession, either already made, or in probability to be made hereafter; by virtue of which reference it was to be under the same secrecy, and to have the benefit of the same Seal, being under it either directly or indirectly. Thus that grand Conspiracy was consigned to take its best opportunity; as needing no Repentance, but in case of a failure or non-performance. And so this work was still in the dark.

Moreover we might conceive our selves safe from such a machination of any Christians by that Divine determination. *We must not do evil that good may come of it.* For if *their damnation were just*, who slanderously reported of S. Paul, that he said, *Let*

Rom. iii. 8.

us do evil, that good may come; who could imagin that in any case of conscience this should be admitted? And indeed a great scruple arose even in the minds of the most confident Assassins, whether the innocent and the innocent might be destroyed and perish together. *That be far from them* Gen. xviii. 25. *to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked; and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from them:* (though all ought to have been accounted innocent in respect of them who had no authority to make such a discrimination, or to condemn and execute justice upon either:) Yet the sacred Oracle could determine, that if the good to be expected were greater than the evil which was to be executed, if the destruction of the innocent might be compensated by the advantage which followed; then it was not only evidently lawful, but, so far as the good exceeded the evil, meritorious. And now let the evil be never so great, they were sure in the opinion of those whom they consulted, the propagation of the Ro-
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man Faith, the advancement of the Catholick Cause, the restitution of the Papal Jurisdiction was the greatest good imaginable, to which the ruin of the nocent or the innocent could bear no proportion.

All this was *sought in the deep to hide their counsel*: all this was wrought *in the dark*; and they said often among themselves, *Who seeth it? who knoweth it?* Wherefore if, notwithstanding all this contrivance of secrecy to hide their counsel, the horrid Conspiracy was revealed, the snare discovered, and *their turning of things upside down esteemed as the potters clay*, God did then proceed to do a marvelous work for this people and nation, even a marvelous work and a wonder. This is that which the Lord hath done, and it were the greatest wonder if it were not marvelous in our eyes. Which is the first part of our Case.

Secondly, The wonderful work of this day is never to be forgotten. God hath saved our lives by a great deliverance, as Joseph said; and can we ever be ungrateful to him

him who hath given us *such a deliverance as this*, as *Ezra* speaks? What can we ever expect to make us mindful, if upon *such a deliverance as this* we prove forgetful? The Text teacheth us that it is the design of him who wrought it, that we should remember it; and shall we fulfil the design of our enemies, whom he defeated? Let them deny it, who may be ashamed of the intended cruelty; let not us forget it, who ought to rejoice in the mercy; lest we be unmindful of him whose the mercy was, and for which he expecteth to be honoured by us. God made the memory of his wonderful works to be part of the Religion of his antient people; such were the Passover and the Sabbath: let us think it a part of our Religion to remember this wonderful work. Let this day *never fail from among us, nor the memorial of it perish from our seed*. May we never live to see those times, in which the memory of this day shall be blotted out, or rather cast out with indignation: may we never hear of such an Act of Oblivion.

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Nor is it our Duty only to desire, but also to endeavour the perpetuity of this Recognition: and consequently to use the just and proper means to perpetuate it. It was our Religion, the settled Religion of the Church of *England*, which was then aimed at; and nothing will preserve the due memory of this day, but the preservation of that. Nothing but that procured the enmity; nothing but that obtained the mercy. We know no other reason why men of the same nation, but of a different persuasion in matters of Religion, should so combine against us; we are conscious of no other motive on our part to incline the infinite goodness of God to be so propitious to us; nor can any other consideration without this set a sufficient value upon the mercy received. Let us therefore earnestly contend for the Faith which was once delivered unto the Saints: Let us keep that which was then preserved, if we expect the generations to come should praise the Lord for this deliverance. The persons are now dead whose lives were then preserved; if we suffer the same Religion to perish which

which was then so signally owned, there will be little left for which the memory should be continued. Thus let us endeavour to perpetuate the memorial of this day, as the most just and innocent revenge.

But these things are in the hand of God; that God who saved our late Sovereign alive upon this day, and suffered him to be cruelly murdered upon another. When I consider the present condition of our Church and Nation, and fear that our *sins* begin to be *full*; I cannot but think the enemies of our Religion, the Papal Emissaries, have now much an easier way to destroy it. They shall not need to seek so far into the deep, or to lay so vast a work in the dark: but then I cannot chuse but remember those words which I read so frequently in the Scriptures, *God save the King: God save the King* 2 Sam. xvi. 16, &c. God save him from the open rebellion of the Schismatical party, the ruine of his Father. God save him from the secret machinations of the Papal Faction, the danger of his Grandfather. *God save the King*; and let all the people say, *Amen*.

F I N I S.